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The War in Libya

The Labour Government Connection.

Until recently, Colonel Gaddafi was a friend of Western capitalism, feted by former Labour Prime Ministers Tony Blair and Gordon Brown while his son, Saif, whose LSE doctorate was monitored by Professor David Held, now writing Ed Miliband's political manifesto, and signed off by the Labour peer, Lord Desai, was a close *confidant* of Lord Mandelson. In 2005, the Labour government licenced the sale of £29.5m worth of "*military transport aircraft*" to Libya; and in 2009 and 2010 again authorised the sale of "*bombing computers*" and "*military aircraft equipment*" (PRIVATE EYE 18th March 2011). In return lucrative oil deals were forged with the Libyan Oil Corporation and BP with a major exploration and production agreement in March 2007.

Following the up-risings across Libya in February 2011, Gaddafi's regime, with a track record of brutality, torture and repression, became once more a pariah State with the ironic spectacle of British Typhoon jet fighters (cost in use of £80,000 per hour) destroying British military equipment bought by the Gaddafi regime, though not before his secret police had used on protesters an assortment of "*anti-riot shields, body armour, anti-riot guns, crowd control ammunition, smoke ammunition, tear gas/irritant ammunition*" purchased from British arm manufacturers via Serbia (loc cit).

As with all conflicts involving British capitalism there are a number of armchair supporters of the war urging deracination of Libyan tanks, artillery pieces and communication systems. They do not have to clear up the charred remains of soldiers nor witness the grief of parents and partners. The journalist, David Aaronovitch, for example, has a track record for indulging in war by proxy (TIMES 18th March 2011). He is content to let someone else do the killing and dying while he berates anyone who dares call into question the actions of Western capitalism pursuing its oil interests while masquerading as the Seventh Cavalry coming to the rescue of beleaguered homesteaders.

Capitalism's Need for Oil

And so another war takes place for Western oil interests and the protection of its spheres of strategic interest. Libya has the largest oil reserves in Africa with 42 billion barrels of oil and over 1.3 trillion cubic metres of gas. With only 25 per cent of Libya's surface territory explored to date the actual reserves could be even greater (<http://www.oilgasLibya.com>). Before the uprising, Libya exported most of its oil to Europe (ARAB TIMES 20th March 2011). The largest quantity of oil from Libya, 32 percent, goes to Italy. Germany takes another 14 percent,

Spain 10 percent and France nine percent. Other big customers are China (10 percent) and the United States (five percent).

Europe, in particular, needs Libya's oil and the current civil war is an opportunity to insert a more favourable regime in Tripoli. The first serious move to give support to the insurrection was the failure of an SAS protected diplomatic mission from Britain to the rebels at Benghazi while a more decisive shift in the balance of power was the French air force's destruction of Gaddafi's weapon systems on the outskirts of the city weighting the civil war in favour of the insurgents.

Why the importance of Libyan oil for Western capitalism? The magazine COMMODITIES NOW put the question into some perspective both for European oil production and the opportunities for Western capitalism in removing Gaddafi and replacing him with a more pliant regime.

While the rest of the world should be able to handle the loss of Libya's light sweet oil, it poses severe problems for Europe's already troubled refining sector, which relies on high quality crudes to make any money at all. Loss of Libya's oil production has exposed the escalating problem for European refiners trapped between increasingly stringent standards for transportation fuels and their own lack of investment in upgrading and especially desulphurisation capacity as a result of poor profitability... Libya's light sweet oils are particularly prized by refiners because they yield a high proportion of valuable products (gasoline and diesel), while minimising the need for expensive processes to break up larger, less valuable molecules... and remove sulphur ... Loss of Libyan crude has exposed deeper structural problems in European refining that are blocking investment. In a note published in November 2010, the European Commission said EU refining capacity is out of step with evolving demand. EU refineries produce too much gasoline, for which demand is shrinking, and not enough middle distillates such as diesel, for which demand is growing rapidly... Between 1990 and 2008, demand for middle distillates rose 35 per cent, and demand for jet fuel/kerosene and diesel increased 82 per cent, while demand for gasoline fell 26 per cent. But while EU supply of middle distillates rose 28 per cent, gasoline production fell only 4 per cent (20th March 2011)

The Problem with Nuclear Energy

Another immediate consideration for Western capitalism is the disaster at the nuclear plants at Fukushima in Japan, forcing governments to reassess their future oil requirements. The crisis in the Japanese Nuclear industry - known about since 2002 - highlights the safety risks associated with operating nuclear plants and has already prompted governments around the world to question the wisdom of reliance on nuclear energy.

The initial reaction by governments has been to adopt a precautionary stance. Germany, for instance, has decided to suspend its unpopular decision taken last year to extend the life of its nuclear reactors while the Swiss and Indian governments are also reviewing their nuclear energy plans along with the US who were about to approve a new generation of nuclear plants (WASHINGTON POST 14th March 2011).

Nearer home, the chief executive of RWE Npower warned the British Government that it could be forced to delay plans to build UK nuclear power plants especially if the costs go up due to more stringent safety measures and the deregulation of the nuclear industry does not happen (DAILY TELEGRAPH 24th March 2011). The need for secure oil routes has now returned to the top of the political agenda.

The Socialist Position on War

The problem of sourcing energy for capitalist production is an issue Socialists have no interest in. Nor do Socialists take sides in capitalism's wars. The Socialist Party of Great Britain has a consistent and principled track record of opposing capitalism's wars on the grounds of class, class interest and class struggle. War cannot solve working class problems. War cuts across the fundamental class interest of the working class and forces them to support different sections of the capitalist class. In our pamphlet: "THE SOCIALIST PARTY AND WAR" (1950), we wrote:

Wars reflect the determination of Governments to defend or to gain control of valuable possessions by armed might when other means have failed. The purpose of war is to gain or maintain the mastery of territories where there are rich mineral deposits, vital land, sea or air routes or areas where goods can be sold or capital invested (p. 8).

The statement was written 61 years ago. It could easily have been written today. It is the special contribution of the SPGB to Socialist thought to have recognised that Socialism “spreads through the workers acquiring socialist knowledge; the waging of war can have no part in that necessary process” (p. 93).

Hypocrisy, War and Propaganda

War also brings in its wake hypocrisy, propaganda and lies. Socialists, for example, note the make-up of the Arab League, one of the pivotal movers in the United Nations resolution to enforce a Libyan no fly zone.

Most of the countries that form The Arab League habitually use political thugs, torture and violence to suppress dissent. The shooting of unarmed protesters in the capital of Bahrain seems to have been totally ignored by Cameron, Sarkozy and Obama as they urged Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa to join their adventurism. Is their silence something to do with the Naval Support Activity Bahrain; a US navy base sheltering the US Naval Forces Central Command and the US Fifth Fleet?

Then there is Saudi Arabia, another member of the Arab League. Saudi Arabia is the breeding ground for the terrorist organisation, Al Qaida who exports its brand of Islamist terrorism around the world and who supports the rebels in Libya (ironically the rebel leadership have been trained in the US and UK to speak the politically correct language of “democracy” and “freedom”). The US is now preparing to arm the rebels via Saudi Arabia while there are numerous SAS “boots on the ground” in Libya itself (THE DAILY MAIL 25 March 2011). And as one wit observed, if the rebel forces advance to Tripoli, armed to the teeth with US weaponry, and launch attacks which cause civilian casualties, “will the British government decide to bomb the rebels? Or are some civilians more innocent than others” (THE DAILY TELEGRAPH 25th March 2011)?

Saudi Arabia’s ruling dictatorship also advocates the Wahhabi doctrine which is virulently anti-Semitic and forces Saudi woman to conform to repressive religious edicts restricting dress, transportation, movement and the ability to participate politically. Long after Gaddafi has gone from the political scene; the House of Saud will be feted by Western Capitalism and arm manufacturers deaf to the screams of political prisoners, the subjugation of women and the barbaric treatment of those who transgress Saudi law.

Wars under capitalism are not fought for “humanitarian” reasons but over the necessity to secure vital resources like oil, protect trade routes and maintain spheres of strategic interest. There are many brutal dictatorships in the world but war is only pursued if it is in the national interest to do so, not on grounds of morality. As to the lies and propaganda, the coalition’s rocket jet and submarine missile attacks are not protecting “civilian lives” as the UN resolution misleadingly states, but assisting the rebels to defeat Colonel Gadhafi’s regime. As Hiram Johnson once remarked: “The first casualty when war comes is the truth”; although manipulation by politicians of the truth is par for the course no matter whether a country is at war or not.

Socialists do not place moral weights on capitalist countries and we reject the theological doctrine of “a just war”. Governments, in trying to come to terms with the conflicts and contradictions generated by capitalism, turn to war when other means fail. All capitalist countries exploit the working class and workers have identical class interests with workers elsewhere in the world not with their own capitalist class and politicians. Instead, Socialists urge the working class to look to their own class interests. The oil wars will continue throughout the 21st century until the world’s working class stops following leaders and instead organises consciously and politically to replace capitalism with Socialism.

ABOLISH CAPITALISM NOW

Capitalism can never be made to run in the interest of all society. The profit system cannot produce to satisfy human need because production takes place only to meet the demand of paying customers. Production is therefore restricted

to what people can pay for. But what people pay for and what they need to live decent lives are two totally different things. Consequently, capitalism acts as both a fetter on production and a barrier to ensuring people's needs are met no matter where they live. Capitalism also causes the business cycle with its periodic trade crises and economic depressions.

Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class and through the minority ownership of the means of production forces the majority of the planet to live in poverty. Capitalism can only work in the interests of the capitalist class ; a minority in society who live off the unearned income of rent, interest and profit.

Capitalism can never be reformed to meet the needs of all society. The failure of reforms can be seen in the persistence of entrenched social problems like unemployment, war, poverty, poor housing and social alienation. Capitalism also denies to the working class creativity and enjoyment in work. To solve their problems the workers must abolish capitalism and replace the profit system with Socialism. This will involve a social revolution where a socialist majority take conscious political action to gain control of the machinery of government to ensure a smooth transformation of production for profit to production for social use.

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The Arab Awakening - and the Myth of 'Direct Action'

In a discussion about the '*Arab Awakening*' on BBC NEWSNIGHT (14 February 2011), one speaker asked this important question:

How do unarmed people defeat tanks, torturers, riot police and repressive regimes, backed by Western politicians?

However, in no Arab country has power actually been surrendered - so far. Individual autocrats can be got rid of but their governments still remain. For instance, Tunisia's Ben Ali fled abroad but his cronies stayed in power. Egypt's Hosni Mubarak is no longer in power but his friends in the armed forces have formed an '*interim government*': who knows how long it will be before they actually get round to holding those promised elections. The King of Jordan sacked his government and replaced those placemen with another set, also appointed by himself. In Saudi Arabia, some concessions were made: out of the kingdom's vast oil revenues with some \$60 billion being allocated to welfare. Even in Libya, Gaddafi decided to hand out cheques to appease the people.

This has been the general response by rulers to the wave of Arab unrest, sweeping through region, from the Atlantic to Iraq, threatening the power of autocrats - whether of the Napoleonic '*strong man*' type, or simply hereditary sheikhs and monarchs. In order to safeguard the continued power of the ruling elites, concessions of a limited nature – political and/or economic - are made. Then they play for time so as to allow divisions to emerge among the protesters, with their differing demands. "*Divide and Rule*" – an old British Empire maxim.

Libya has been the most overtly violent in its response. The streets of Tripoli have been deserted by day and disturbed by gunfire at night. Colonel Gaddafi in an incoherent televised rant (25 February 2011) had conflicting messages for '*his people*'. Accusing the protesters of being drunk or on drugs, he alternated between threats - "*Libya will turn into a burning hell!*", and in the next breath telling them to "*Dance and sing! Joy and rejoice!*" (An echo here of how Stalin used to force his Politbureau members to dance for his amusement.) In addition, Gaddafi used the power of religion to make further terrifying threats in the mosques: "*Those who fight the rulers will die as infidels!*" Their fate would be horrible - eternal damnation.

Which brings us back to that key question: "*How do unarmed people defeat tanks, torturers, riot police and repressive regimes?*" There is a romantic, revolutionary myth, urging '*direct action*'. In the 19th century, the 1848 year of revolutions and the Paris Commune of 1871, saw the working people take to the streets, using barricades and cobblestones against the armed forces of the state. In the Arab states, where popular protests have not been about Socialism, so far any successes have been achieved only when the armed forces have switched sides or refused to fire on their people.

Media commentators argue that the people in these Arab countries are unhappy but that each country is unhappy in its own way. (Egypt is not Jordan, Bahrain is not Yemen.) But there are some features which all these countries have in common: their autocratic or monarchic form of government, without any accountability; the high proportion of the population who are under 30 years, often well-educated, and now all too often unemployed – disappointed and discontented. There is hunger too, as world food prices have soared. In all countries, there is the system of wage-labour and commodity production.

Like Marx, the Socialist Party of Great Britain has consistently argued that the only way to overthrow capitalism is by political organisation to take over control of the machinery of government and of the armed forces. It is only by doing this that a democratic Socialist movement of the working class would be able to get rid of the capitalist class system.

But to do this would require what we have yet to see in any Arab revolt or protest movement: an awareness of the exploitation of the working class *as a class*, and an understanding of the international nature of the class struggle, the global conflict of interests between wage-labour and capital.

While it would be nice to suppose that such a revolution could succeed simply through logical argument and the power of persuasion, it would be suicidal to rely on this alone. A class whose vital interests are threatened by non-socialists taking direct action, either peacefully or otherwise, is likely to resist, violently, with whatever weapons and forces it has at its disposal.

There are many lessons from history to support our argument. Socialists cannot forget the tragic fate of the Communards, when the French government did a deal with their Prussian ‘*enemy*’ to crush the Paris Commune. Or the Peterloo massacre of workers who supported an opposition movement. Or the Russian Tsar’s use of Cossacks in 1905 to attack people in Petersburg, and so on. So if Gaddafi uses mercenaries from other countries to attack those who he sees as his enemies, that is simply typical of any regime which sees a threat to its grasp on power.

As for American and other foreign friends of freedom and “*universal human rights*”, their real concern is not liberty but oil and their strategic interests. Where those are concerned, they would do any deal necessary, typically preferring ‘*stable*’ dictatorships to less reliable democracies. The Arab protesters seek only better forms of government, reforms of the political system; they are not a threat to the capitalist system, and class exploitation will continue, whether or not they succeed in their sadly limited demands.

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20 Years of the Reconstituted Socialist Party of Great Britain

The Reconstituted Socialist Party of Great Britain is now 20 years old. The SPGB was reconstituted by comrades from Camden and North West London Branches on the 11th of June 1991 and they were joined by members from other Branches who had resigned on a matter of principle at the actions of the Executive Committee calling for our expulsion and the shameful vote to expel sound Socialists by a majority of the Clapham Socialist Party membership.

And let us not forget why Socialists from Camden and North West London Branches were expelled in the first place. They were expelled for continuing to use the full name of the SPGB in propaganda as required by the 1904 OBJECT AND DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES of the Socialist Party of Great Britain.

Many our comrades are no longer with us; the late Edgar Hardcasatle (Hardy), Cyril May, Harry Baldwin, Merion Davies, Jim D’Arcy, Harry Young to name but a few. They and many others all gave a life-time to the Socialist cause.

Nevertheless we retain the capacity and organisational structure to see out all those who conspired against sound Socialists whose only “*crime*” was to take political action within the framework of the OBJECT AND DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES to which we subscribe. Our political enemies will not be forgotten or forgiven. They have tried to silence us but they have failed.

So what have we achieved in the past 20 years?

We have carried on political propaganda putting the case for Socialism and only Socialism. We have ensured the original OBJECT AND DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES has been prominent in our publications and web site.

Other features of our propaganda over the last 20 years have been as follows:

- * We have argued against the working class supporting “*democratic reform movements*”.
- * We have recorded our objection to the imagined difference between “*reformism*” and “*reforms*”. The support of reforms has never been a policy of the Socialist Party of Great Britain.
- * We have stated that capitalism will not collapse rejecting theories advocating either an environmental catastrophe or the rate of profit falling to the point where capitalists would no longer be able to exploit the working class.
- * We have explained through the application of the Marxian labour theory of value topics as diverse as inflation, money, banking credit, interest, class exploitation, productivity and taxation.
- * We have shown that Parliament can be used by a Socialist majority for the revolutionary purpose of abolishing capitalism.
- * We have continued to stress the need for socialists to gain control of the machinery of government before establishing Socialism.
- * We have dismissed reactionary ideas suggesting the need for “*socialist vouchers*” and a “*transitional period*” between capitalism and Socialism and we have distanced ourselves from the arid and utopian speculation about Socialist administration and a detailed assessment of how future Socialists will conduct their affairs.

We have also published many pamphlets covering the materialist conception of history, war and terrorism, the anti-Socialist policies of the Labour Party, economic crises and trade depressions, the class struggle and Marxian economics all of which have been well received and continued to be read on our web site.

In fact it is a reflection of the quality and Socialist content of what we write that over 5,000 individuals are directly linked to our web site and the number of visitors grows each month despite Clapham pulling our original web site.

Members still attend trade union and other political events handing out literature and leaflets; notably at Tolpuddle, Burston, Burford and the May Day event at Clerkenwell where we have made many friends over the years. We attended the large demonstration in March 2011 organised by the TUC as well as smaller events. Although we have a small membership we punch above our size.

Regular lectures are held at Marchmont Street Community Centre and the publication of our journal, SOCIALIST STUDIES, another fruitful collaboration by volunteers, is distributed throughout the world both by e-mail and snail-mail.

The task of keeping the Reconstituted SPGB going has been a collective task by Socialists who have no leaders or intellectuals with doctorates and professorial chairs doing the thinking for us. We are just members of the working class acting consciously and politically as Socialists in our own class interest.

As a matter of historical fact and principle we reprint below the MANIFESTO OF THE RECONSTITUTED SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN issued in June 1991.

The statement below was issued by the reconstituted Socialist Party of Great Britain on 11 June 1991.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain was reconstituted on 11th June 1991. All those who took part in the formation of the new party had been expelled from "The Socialist Party" on 7th May 1991 for what was described as "undemocratic behaviour". This consisted of continuing to hold propaganda lectures in the name of Socialist Studies when that name had been proscribed by the 1988 Annual Conference on the grounds that the name The Socialist Party of Great Britain was nationalistic. From then on all propaganda had to be in the name of "The Socialist Party".

We do not accept that the abbreviation of the Party's name was the real reason for our expulsion. The real reason is that a majority of the active membership do not agree with the Party case as expressed within the framework of the Declaration of Principles. They have ignored these principles and have also undermined the clear meaning expressed within them at successive Annual Conferences in recent years.

For example 1985 Annual Conference carried a resolution calling for the immediate abolition of the State: an anarchist proposition which contradicts the meaning of Clause 6 of the Declaration of principles. This calls on the working class to organise consciously and politically in order that this machinery (including the armed forces) "may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation...". If the State is to be immediately abolished it would be impossible to establish Socialism.

Annual conference 1986 decided to change the Party's name officially to that of the Socialist Party. Henceforth it had two names, both official .and unofficial. Annual Conference 1988 proscribed the use of "Socialist Studies" in propaganda spoken and written, press adverts, leaflets etc. This was a breach of Clause 8 which begins "The Socialist Party of Great Britain therefore enters the field of political action..." Members who stood by this principle and carried it into effect were expelled without charge or hearing for "undemocratic behaviour".

Annual Conference 1990 gave support to non-Socialist democratic reform movements in Eastern Europe which were seeking to replace state capitalist governments with democratic capitalist governments. In October/November 1990 the E.C. threatened to charge N. W. London and Camden/Bloomsbury Branches unless they withdrew a leaflet which contained the statement that the Party was opposed to democratic reform movements. In their letter the E.C. sent a copy of the 1990 Conference resolution. This was in breach of Clause 7, which states "The party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party".

Support for the Polish organisation "Solidarity" had previously been given in a leaflet published by the Pamphlets Committee, which was later reproduced in the Socialist Standard of January 1982. "Solidarity" became the capitalist government in Poland in September 1989 and its main leader, Lech Walesa, became the President. Despite this the E. C. refused to repudiate this leaflet which gave support to Solidarity.

It became increasingly obvious that The Socialist Party was rapidly deteriorating into a mere anti-capitalist reform party. The Socialist Standard recently congratulated the university students demonstrating in Tiananmen Square on their courage in facing up to the armed forces of the State, when inevitably they were slaughtered.

The Socialist Standard generally is a pathetic imitation of the old Socialist Standard. Most of its articles are irrelevant to the real task of the Socialist party which is to get the working class to understand Socialism as a matter of urgency.

The Socialist Standard consists of rambling articles on every other subject except Socialism. It soft peddles on stressing the need for the working class to capture control of the political machinery. In addition it contains misleading information and makes absurd claims which cannot be substantiated. In no way could the Socialist Standard be regarded as a fitting instrument for expressing Socialist ideas.

The socialist society aimed at by Socialists is briefly defined in the Party's Object. Now it has been defined as something else by Islington Branch, the largest branch in the Party. They speak of "a truly democratic society". Under this meaningless phrase the party has in recent years repeatedly given support to capitalist organisations on the ground that they were "democratic".

"Islington Branch would like to remind comrades that the object of the Socialist Party is to overthrow capitalism and establish a truly democratic society. The blatantly undemocratic behaviour of some members and the resulting procedural wrangling and personal attacks on fellow members detracts from the revolutionary aim of our Party. This time wasting behaviour is an insult to the efforts of workers around the world who are still suffering and dying for the right to organise democratically" (E.C. Minutes 15th January 1991).

Had we not been expelled it would have been impossible for us to remain in this organisation. We have been forced into existence as were our predecessors in 1904. They were expelled from the Social democratic Party for holding propaganda meetings.

We have adopted the OBJECT AND DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES of the 1904 Party as the basis for our propaganda, and we call on those who have any concern for the future of the Socialist Movement to join with us. The present "Socialist Party" has no future. It will become more and more reformist and opportunist as the restraints of genuine Socialists are removed. There can only be one Socialist Party, and there can only be one objective, Socialism.

EXORCISING RELIGIOUS IDEAS.

Religion is one of the many barriers holding back the establishment of Socialism. Religion justifies leadership, private property ownership, superstition, ignorance and the wealth and privilege of a minority. Socialists have no dislike of those who carry (*Trägers* - Marx) religious beliefs. What we do object to and criticise is the religious beliefs themselves. Socialists oppose all religion as a set of ideas with negative political consequences for the working class. Religion enslaves the mind turning men and women into dependent slaves of images they themselves have created in a false understanding of the world in which they live.

The Feudal ignorance and obscurantism of religion was recently illustrated in a BBC NEWS item (February 17th 2005) where it was reported that the Vatican university has launched a new course for exorcists - Roman Catholic priests who, it is claimed, cast out evil spirits from the possessed. Father Giulio Savoldi, Milan's official exorcist said that the qualities needed of any would-be exorcist would: "...include the supernatural force - the presence of God" and then suggested that the man picked to do this kind of work, "be wise" and should "know how to gather strength not just from within himself but from God".

What is in fact required is a Socialist exorcism of all religion. And this can only come about when a majority of workers begin to take conscious and political action to replace capitalism with Socialism. Religion will not last the enlightenment of Socialist ideas taking hold within a majority of the working class. The need for leadership, spiritual and political will be replaced by workers capable of thinking for themselves. That is how to exorcise religious ideas.

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Do Workers Cause Inflation?

Writing in the MAIL ON SUNDAY (2nd January 2011 the economic journalist, Dan Atkinson wrote:

"Thirty of 40 years ago, strong unions could trigger a destructive wage-price spiral by demanding pay rises to compensate for price rises. Prices then rose again, as firms tried to recoup the higher-wages".

He went on to say that economists believe workers no longer have this power due to "*a flexible labour market*" and "*heavy immigration*"

However, Dan Atkinson did not believe the economists seeing little market flexibility and "*the chances of a renewed wage-price spiral could be much higher than usually assumed*".

Mr Atkinson's statements on inflation call for comment. Mr Atkinson does not state the cause of inflation, although he alludes to workers demanding more wages as a cause for an "*inflation spiral*" and he has little idea of what constitutes the wage.

Despite scare stories by the financial media that we are living in an age of "*deflation*", workers and trade unions have been confronted by the question of inflation –a continuous increase in the cost of living.

The average price level in 2011 was 20 times what it was in 1938 (Office for National Statistics <http://www.statistics.gov.uk>) while the Labour Government, who claimed it would avoid the high levels of inflation associated with the 1974-79 Labour administration when the cost of living almost doubled, entered office in May 1997 with the Retail Price Index (RTI) inflation at 2.6% and left office in 2010 with the RTI rate at 5.1% helped by billions of pounds of Bank of England induced quantitative easing (GUARDIAN 2nd January 2011).

Conditions were different in the century before 1914. There was then no inflation. Although in the nineteenth century prices rose during periods of good trade and fell during periods of bad trade, the price levels in 1914 was actually lower than in 1820.

There were, however, economists and employers in the nineteenth century who put forward an argument that is familiar today. It is that prices are determined by wages, so that wage increase cause a price increase; the so-called "*wage-price spiral*".

All governments, since 1945, Labour and Tory alike, have held the workers responsible for price increases, and urged them to moderate their wage claims if they want inflation to be curbed. Many trade union officials have subscribed to this view of events and added their voice to these appeals of governments.

The argument that wage increases cause price increases is not new. In 1865 a workers' spokesman advanced this as a reason why the unions should not press for higher wages. His case was that higher wages would only put up prices and leave the workers where they were. He was answered in a lecture given by Karl Marx (published as a pamphlet, VALUE, PRICE AND PROFIT").

Marx showed that the theory is at variance with the realities of capitalism. Prices and wages are governed by economic laws inherent in capitalism. The prices of goods are not determined at will by the manufacturer or retailer who always sells at prices determined by market conditions, "*as high as the market will bear*". Unless market conditions change in their favour, the manufacturers cannot raise prices further simply because they have had to pay higher wages. If employers could recoup wage increases by raising prices, there would be no point in their resisting wage claims.

Marx went on to show that the effect of a general wage increase (or any wage increase) would be a corresponding reduction on profits. Though some prices might rise and others fall, a general wage increase would leave the average price level unchanged.

In his lecture Marx was dealing with the situation as it existed in this country at that time, when there was no inflation. The case he put, however, is just as valid today, though continuous inflation has made it more obscure.

If it seems reasonable when an employer says wage increases have raised his costs, it is no less reasonable for a worker to say that he needs higher wages because prices have gone up. It was Marx who showed that wages are themselves prices, the price for which the worker sells his ability to work, what Marx called the worker's labour power; so that when prices rise generally due to inflation, wages go up just like other prices.

Inflation is the result of the action of governments printing and putting into circulation a continuous stream of money, i.e. an excess issue of currency. It is this action which causes an inflationary rise of prices and it is governments, Labour and Tory, who carry sole responsibility –they and nobody else. From under £500 million in 1938, the currency in circulation in 1979 it was nearly £9,000 million, and in 2010, according to the Bank of England, it was £44,900 million (<http://ezinearticles.com/?expert=Michael R Brown>).

Governments have pursued this policy of inflation for more than thirty years in the absurd belief that it would either reduce their debt liabilities, or prevent unemployment. Faced with the consequences of their own policies they have, since 1945, repeatedly tried to moderate the effects by imposing policies of wage restraint and price controls – without any success in keeping prices down.

In the autumn of 1978, as part of its vindictive policy against the working class, the Labour government laid down 5 per cent as the governing rate of further wage increases though the cost of living was rising by 10 per cent. This was too much even for the trade union leaders who had hitherto backed this policy. Both the TUC and the Labour Party, at their annual conferences, refused to accept this. With inflation increasing the Labour Government under Gordon Brown imposed wage freezes in the public sector a policy continued by the current Coalition. Cynically the economists and media continue to blame workers for inflation.

The attitude the workers should adopt is quite simple. Whether capitalism is operated without inflation as in the nineteenth century, or with inflation as has been the case since 1938, the interest of the working class lies in pressing all the time for wages as high as conditions permit. This is the lesson that Marx taught; not forgetting his conclusion that the only real solution to the exploitation of the wages system is to end capitalism itself and establish Socialism.

DINING WITH THE RICH

At the end of March 2011 the Labour party held a Celebration of Equality at the Café de Paris in London. Prices started at £150 for a “*restricted view*” but for those who wanted to have a “*patron’s table*” sitting with a member of the Shadow Cabinet then the ticket would cost them £10,000. The hapless politician, over three courses of fine food and good wine would have to listen to the rich prattle on about their interests and what the Labour Party could do for them.

There was, of course, no celebration of equality. When in government the Labour Party served the interests of the capitalist class just as the Tories did before them. The wealth and privilege of the capitalist class was not challenged. Labour embraced the rich and Blair and Mandelson both tried to be more bourgeois than the bourgeoisie, dining with the corrupt, the tyrannical and the debauched.

Workers peering into the window of the Café de Paris would not help but recall the ending of Orwell’s ANIMAL FARM: *But they had not gone twenty yards when they stopped short. An uproar of voices was coming from the farmhouse. They rushed back and looked through the window again. Yes, a violent quarrel was in progress. There were shoutings, bangings on the table, sharp suspicious glances, furious denials. The source of the trouble appeared to be that Napoleon and Mr Pilkington had each played an ace of spades simultaneously. Twelve voices were shouting in anger, and they were all alike. No question, now, what had happened to the faces of the pigs. The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which.*

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Marx and the Machinery of Government

Introduction

Marx always insisted that the working class must get control of the State machine.

He wrote:

“...the first step in the revolution by the working class, is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy (THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO, 1848 p. 29 SPGB edition).

This is because Marx explicitly stated that the class struggle was in fact a political struggle. The means of production

and class exploitation are protected by the capitalist state, “*the Executive of the bourgeoisie*” (THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO)

He also wrote:

“*Force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one*”. It is itself an economic power. (CAPITAL VOL. 1 Ch. 31 Kerr edition p. 823).

This is frequently distorted to mean that the workers should fight against the State power by armed force. This is a complete reversal of what Marx wrote. He was showing how the capitalists destroyed feudalism and hastened the development of capitalism.

Marx named the different kinds of force used by the capitalists to do this, namely; brute force in the colonies, the national debt, the modern method of taxation, and the protectionist system.

Control of the State power was therefore:

“*those methods...all employing the power of the state, the centralised and organised force of society*”(loc cit).

Civil War in France

For 70 years or more critics of the Socialist Party of Great Britain have been misquoting from Marx’s “CIVIL WAR IN FRANCE” pretending that Marx said that the workers must not get control of the machinery of government, or need not do so.

Marx was writing about the Paris Commune of 1871 and the Socialist critics thought that Marx drew from the Commune the lesson that the workers need not get control of the State machine, but must “*smash it*”.

On the contrary, Marx wrote that the Paris workers rightly got control of the State machine. Quoting from the Central Committee’s MANIFESTO:

“...*They have understood that it is their imperious duty and their absolute right to render themselves masters of their own destinies, by seizing upon the governmental power*” (p. 50 Moscow ed. 1977)

But Marx added the words:

“*But the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for their own purposes*” (page 50).

The Socialist critics-usually supporters of Lenin and Trotsky- conveniently remove or ignore the word “*simply*”

There is all the difference in the world between saying that the workers cannot get hold of the State machinery and saying that they cannot **simply** get hold. Marx said and illustrated it with detail.

What the workers had to do was first to get governmental power and then remove its purely coercive features, but retain its legitimate functions.

The point is that in fact all state machinery is both coercive and administrative; it is an exercise of ruling class force, but also the medium for carrying on necessary administrative functions.

As an example we can consider the Home Office (now split into two independent sections) which controlled police and prisons but also operated health and safety regulations in factories.

So in CIVIL WAR IN FRANCE Marx wrote:

“The few but important functions which still would remain for a central government, (that is, after lopping off its class coercive exercises), “were not to be suppressed, as has been intentionally mis-stated, but were to be discharged by Communal, and therefore strictly responsible agents” (page 55).

And he continued:

“While the merely repressive organs of the old governmental power were to be amputated, its legitimate functions were to be wrested from an authority usurping pre-eminence over society itself, and restored to the responsible agents of society (p. 55).

This statement by Marx should be compared to Clause 6 of the SPGB’s OBJECT AND DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES where the Party states:

“the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that the machinery including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic”.

The SPGB and the Machinery of Government

The Socialist Party of Great Britain has always insisted on the necessity for the workers to gain control of the machinery of government before attempting to establish Socialism. There has never been a parliamentary test of the power of socialist delegates acting on instructions given to them by Socialists. And here we are talking about a majority of Socialists who understand and agree with the case for Socialism.

In Britain, Parliament has a complete and secure control upon the armed forces. The use of troops to break the last fireman strike demonstrates whose side the State takes in industrial disputes.

The use of the machinery of government against workers by Tory and Labour governments demonstrates the necessity for workers to gain control of Parliament before establishing Socialism. And this can only be achieved through a socialist majority sending socialist delegates to Parliament.

The attitude of the Socialist Party of Great Britain on the need to gain control of the political machinery has been logical and consistent. The SPGB holds the same view as Marx as to the necessity of the workers gaining control of the machinery of government before they can establish Socialism. And in countries like Britain the vote will give them that control.

One final point needs to be made. The one way to prevent capitalists from using political power against workers is to stop voting for their politicians and political parties at elections. The SPGB has always urged workers not to vote for any candidate who is a supporter of capitalism “whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist...” (Clause 8 Declaration of Principles).

PARLIAMENT

There has not yet been a parliamentary test of the power of delegates acting on instructions given them by a large body of workers knowing exactly what they are after and how to get it. In fact outside of the Socialist Party of Great Britain the method has never really been applied. Time after time the specious words of some acknowledged leader have diverted groups of workers from their original aims, generally on the plea of expediency. Expediency has for generations acted as a useful pretext to cover the compromising activities of leaders. The foolish belief in leadership has been a considerable barrier to working class knowledge and progress. The power and wealth leaders acquire induce them to fortify their positions and insist on the necessity of leadership as a permanent institution, accompanied by appropriate means of wire-pulling and mutual bargaining for position (QUESTIONS OF THE DAY March 1978 SPGB p. 11).

Socialism

What will be Socialism be like? This is a question which socialists are often asked.

Socialism is not an idea that floats in the air. It is not “*heaven on earth*” but a practical response to capitalism. It is rooted in the material existence of men and women – members of the working class as they struggle to exist in a system based on class exploitation and the subsequent privilege of a capitalist minority.

Foremost Socialism will be a world-wide social system. The world’s resources will be at the disposal of all society rather than for the enjoyment and luxury of a privileged few. The means of production and distribution will be commonly owned and democratically controlled by all of society.

Common ownership and democratic control will provide the social framework in which a socialist society will be able to produce social goods and services purely to meet human needs. The task of Socialists is to establish this framework in which production for use will take place.

And using the productive forces directly to meet human needs is the simple Socialist proposition put before the working class. What is more rational than men and women working co-operatively together producing goods and services to meet the requirements of all society. A society where people produce and distribute the best products that the techniques of production and distribution at the time permit.

Of course, Socialism has never existed. There has never been a sufficient majority to take conscious and political action through a principled Socialist Party to establish Socialism.

Soviet Russia was not Socialist but a form of capitalism just as China was under Mao and Cuba under Castro. Workers were still exploited producing more social wealth than they received in wages and salaries.

Kibbutzim were not examples of socialism any more than co-operatives. You cannot create Socialist communities within capitalism any more than you can use co-operatives to surf into capitalism on a wave of utopian optimism.

Without a Socialist majority Socialism is impossible. This is not a truism but a political fact. Workers have to become socialists for Socialism to be possible. There are very few original political ideas but Marx produced one; he said that Socialism had to be established consciously and politically by the working class alone.

No one else could establish Socialism for the working class. Socialism had to be established by an overwhelming majority of society in the interest of the overwhelming majority. Workers have to agree to organise a social system based on voluntary co-operation. They have to agree what they are signing up for.

Furthermore Socialism will come out of capitalism. Socialism is not a utopian dream but a practical consequence of addressing in a revolutionary way the major social problems which are caused by capitalism and daily face the working class.

The fundamental problem confronting the working class is that they do not own the means of production. Workers do not own the Earth’s resources, factories, transport and communication systems and so on. Instead the means of production are owned by the capitalist class and this ownership is guaranteed by the protection of the machinery of government through their politicians in Parliament.

Production and distribution under capitalism takes place to make profit. It takes place for the anti-social pursuit of capital accumulation. What capitalism does not exist for is to meet the need of all society. In fact, capitalism causes deeply ingrained social problems like war, unemployment and poverty. Yet capitalism has the potential to decently feed, house, clothe and educate the entire world’s population. Capitalism deliberately restricts production. The class

relations of production act as a severe impediment on the forces of production.

And this failure of capitalism to use production to meet human need has created socialist consciousness, socialist ideas, socialist political action and the formation of a Socialist Party. “*The working class is revolutionary or it is nothing*” remarked Karl Marx. The class struggle has to be a political struggle.

Socialism will not come into existence by itself. It cannot be legislated for by well-meaning politicians. The capitalist class will not give up their privileges voluntarily. Just as the Feudal aristocracy lost their political power by social revolution so must the capitalist class.

And by social revolution Socialists do not mean street barricades, student sit-ins, the secret plots of professional revolutionaries, the General Strike and various forms of violent or non-violent direct action. Social revolution is the process of the formation of a socialist majority in capitalism who will be in the position to send socialist delegates to Parliament to gain control of the machinery of government and convert it “*from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation...*” (clause 6).

No reactionary force will prevent a socialist majority using the vote in a revolutionary way. No minority will be able to prevent socialist delegates carrying out the socialist mandate of a majority of society. Despite the misrepresentation of the Socialist case by the SWP and others there can and will be a revolutionary use of the vote and of Parliament.

And Socialist Delegates will have one function; to ensure that the machinery of government is used as an agent of emancipation by allowing the orderly and peaceful transformation of commodity production for exchange and profit to Socialist production for social use.

Socialists are unable to give a detailed account of a future Socialist society. Not only is it an undemocratic presumption to tell future socialists how to organise themselves but we just do not possess the information a future socialist society will have at its disposal to resolve problems and meet human need.

This does not invalidate Socialism but separates utopian speculation from a scientific exposition of Socialism. Socialism will come out of capitalism through socialist revolution with the techniques of production having reached a certain point of development. The case for Socialism is not utopian but practical.

Socialism is necessary because of the failure of capitalism to meet the needs of all society where one of those core needs is creative labour. Capitalism has the potential to meet the needs of all society but this potential is restrained by the narrow class relations of production. Consequently all capitalism can offer the working class is a life of exploitation and social problems like war, poverty and unemployment.

What we can say about a future socialist society is that there will be free voluntary social labour; there will be no commodity production and exchange for profit; no employers and employees, no wages system, no classes and no coercive State. Instead there will be an “*administration of things*” in which socialist production and distribution will be democratically structured “*from each according to ability to each according to need*”.

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The SPGB and the question of reforms

After breaking with the Social Democratic Federation in 1904, the first SOCIALIST STANDARD set out the Socialist Party of Great Britain’s uncompromising position on reforms made the SPGB a unique Socialist Party distinct and separate from other political organisations of the day.

The first ever Editorial in the first SOCIALIST STANDARD (September 1904), had this to say on the question of reforms:

“In dealing with all questions affecting the welfare of the working class our standpoint will be frankly revolutionary. We shall show that the misery, the poverty and the degradation caused by capitalism grows far more rapidly than does the enacting of palliative legislation for its removal. The adequate alleviation of these ills can be brought about only by a political party having Socialism for its object. So long as the powers of administration are controlled by the capitalist class so long can that class render nugatory any legislation they consider to unduly favour the workers”.

An editorial feature article in that same first issue went on to say:

“The Social Democratic Federation”, formed to further the cause of Socialism in Great Britain has, during the last few years, been steadily following the compromising policy adopted from the first by the Independent Labour Party. So much is this the case that today, for all purposes of effective Socialist propaganda they have ceased to exist and are surely developing into a mere reform party seeking to obtain the provision of free maintenance for school children”

Fifty years later, another milestone in the Party's history was the publication of the *Anniversary Number* of the SOCIALIST STANDARD.

In looking back over 50 years and reaffirming the Party's Principles and the stand taken against war, Russian capitalism under the Bolsheviks and reform policies, this is an excellent piece of Socialist literature. On page 3, under the heading: *“Our contributions to the Socialist Movement”*, fourteen points were listed. Number three of these points stated:

“Opposition to all reform policies and unwavering pursuit of Socialism as the sole objective”.

Point number ten said:

“The Socialist Party must be entirely independent of all other political parties entering into no agreement or alliances for any purpose. Compromising this independence for any purpose however seemingly innocent, will lead to non-socialists giving support to the Party”.

Writing the word “Socialism” across ballot papers where no Socialist was standing was reaffirmed, as a way of showing rejection of all the other parties and expressing the sole demand for Socialism.

The same uncompromising case for Socialism against reformism is made in the Party pamphlets.

THE MANIFESTO of the Socialist Party of Great Britain was the Party's first pamphlet, published in 1905. It was full of trenchant condemnation of all the opportunist reform parties of the time and rejected outright their political trading and vote-catching stunts. The independence of the Party was vigorously proclaimed. The case stated is as fresh today as it was in 1905 and remains the position of the reconstituted S.P.G.B today.

Thus, for example, on page 9 of THE MANIFESTO:-

“A glance over past history shows that every class that emancipated itself had to commence by the capture of political machinery that is the power of government. It is therefore necessary for workers to organise a political party having for its object the capture of political power. This political party of the workers can only be a socialist party because socialism alone is based on the facts of working-class existence Socialism alone can free the workers from the necessity of selling himself for the profit of a master: Socialism alone will strip him of his merchandise character and allow him to become a full social being”.

There has been a chapter on the subject of reformism in every re-issue of QUESTIONS OF THE DAY since it first appeared in 1932. In that first issue on page 18 it stated:

*“...we know that the **immediate** need of our class is emancipation, which can only be achieved through the*

establishment of Socialism" (emphasis in the original).

There is also a detailed chapter on Parliament and "*the necessity of gaining control of the machinery of government*"
Page 44.

The rejection of bartering our independence for promises of reform is stressed again. No opportunism, but a sober understanding of the fact that Parliament controls the armed forces, so Parliament must be captured "*before attempting to uproot the existing foundations of society*"(p.68).

A chapter on Fascism made the unanswerable argument that the only way to prevent political power being used against the working class was for workers to refrain from voting capitalist agents into power.

Forty six years later, in 1978, QUESTIONS OF THE DAY was largely rewritten and brought up to date the treatment of old questions and dealt with later ones that had arisen, Chinese capitalism among them. There is still a Chapter headed: "*The Futility of Reformism*" and another on Parliament stating again the case consistently stated as before in previous publications.

Exactly the same case and conclusions emerged from the various editions of the pamphlet, THE SOCIALIST PARTY, IT'S PRINCIPLES AND POLICY adopted in June 1991 by the reconstituted Socialist Party of Great Britain.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain never made the false distinction between reform and reformism. The SPGB has only one Object: Socialism. As the Party stated:

"The Socialist Party will not barter its independence for promises of reform. For no matter whether these promises are made sincerely or not, we know that the immediate need of the working class is freedom from exploitation, which can only be achieved through the establishment of Socialism. (QUESTIONS OF THE DAY 1978 p. 33).

For the Party of the working class, one course alone is open: unceasing hostility to all parties that lend their aid to the administration of the capitalist social system and thus contribute, consciously or otherwise, to its maintenance. The object of the socialist Party of Great Britain is the abolition of capitalism and its replacement by a conscious and political majority with Socialism: the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society.

ENGELS ON CAPITALISM

Too little is produced, that is the cause of the whole thing. But why is too little produced? Not because the limits of production... are exhausted. No, but because the limits of production... are determined not by the number of hungry bellies but by the number of purses able to buy and to pay... Bourgeois society does not and cannot wish to produce any more. The moneyless bellies, the labour which cannot be utilised for profit and therefore cannot buy, is left to the death-rate. Let a sudden industrial boom... make it possible for this labour to be employed with profit, then it will get money to spend, and the means of subsistence have never hitherto been lacking. This is the endless vicious circle in which the whole economic system revolves. One presupposes bourgeois conditions as a whole, and then proves that every part of them is a necessary part – and therefore an "eternal law. Engels letter to Lange, Letters on Capital 1984, 29 March 1865

MARX ON THE CREDIT SYSTEM

The credit system has a dual character immanent in it: on the one hand it develops the motive of capitalist production, enrichment by the exploitation of others' labour, into the purest and most colossal system of gambling and swindling, and restricts ever more the already small number of the exploiters of social wealth; on the other hand however it constitutes the form of transition towards a new mode of production. It is this dual character that gives the principal spokesman for credit,..., their nicely mixed character of swindler and prophet (CAPITAL VOLUME III Penguin ed. 1996 p. 573)

Blair's War For Oil

There appears to be two types of political idiots; ones who were once members of the mis-named Communist Party now known to be underwritten by Bolshevik gold and their children who became politically active later within the “*New Labour project*” inspired, in part, by intellectuals around MARXISM TODAY. David Aaronovitch, the son of a leading Communist Party member, Sam Aaronovitch, co-author in the 1980’s of the reformist and futile policy document known as the *Alternative Economic Strategy*, dumped the anti-socialist politics of his father and took Murdoch’s shilling to write pieces in THE TIMES praising the Blair government, which he believed could do no wrong. He is also a seasoned cheerleader for capitalism’s wars. However he is now looking rather silly. First he was convinced that weapons of mass destruction would be found in Saddam Hussein’s Iraq but was proven incorrect. Then he denied the Iraq war was about oil. Wrong again.

According to the INDEPENDENT (April 20th 2010) Tony Blair’s government discussed plans with British companies to exploit oil opportunities in post Saddam Iraq at least five months before joining the invasion of the country. For Socialists this is hardly surprising. Capitalism’s wars are fought for raw resources like oil not for morality. Blair’s Labour administration was no different. Secret papers reveal that the then international trade minister Baroness Symons told energy companies back in November 2002 that they should be given a share of the Iraq’s huge oil reserves. Greg Muttitt, co-director of oil campaign group Platform secured minutes from meetings with Labour government Ministers and oil executives from Shell and BP using Freedom of Information requests. After one meeting, in October 2002, Edward Chaplin, then Foreign Office Middle East Director is quoted as saying: “*We were determined to get a fair slice of the action for UK companies in post Saddam Iraq*”.

Tony Blair and his supporters in the Media and oil industry, like David Aaronovitch, have always maintained that war for oil in Iraq before 2003 was, according to Blair, “*an absurd conspiracy theory*”. But government minutes from an October 2002 meeting with BP, Shell and British Gas said: “*Baroness Symons agreed it would be difficult to justify British companies losing out in Iraq if the UK had itself been a conspicuous supporter of the U.S. government throughout the crisis*”. David Aaronovitch has now moved on to support NATO’s war in Libya from the safety of his sitting room armchair. Again, he denies the conflict has anything to do with oil. One of capitalism’s useful idiots it would seem.

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Reform or Revolution?

There have been some in the past who wanted the Socialist Party of Great Britain to support or oppose reforms “*on their merits*”.

This was never the policy of the Socialist Party of Great Britain then and it certainly not the policy of the S.P.G.B. now.

The S.P.G.B., in its propaganda, never advocates any reforms or declares its support for reforms advocated by others. We reject the deceitful reform demands of the capitalist Left, who advocate reforms, like the right to work, abolition of the nuclear bomb, laws to end to poverty in capitalism and so on knowing that they can never be realised in reality. We stand for Socialism and only Socialism.

The Party line on reforms was stated in the first issue of the SOCIALIST STANDARD (September 1904, Page 4, Column 3). The article did not say that “*free maintenance*” for school children “*is a good reform so we support it*”. What the article did say was this:-

“*They (the Social Democratic Federation) are surely developing into a mere reform party, seeking to obtain the*

provision of Free Maintenance for school children”.

It was a reason for opposing the S.D.F., not a reason for supporting it.

The S.P.G.B. attitude to reforms was not based in the belief that all reforms “*are detrimental to working class interests*” (SOCIALIST STANDARD, July 1911) but on the principle that “*the S.P.G.B....is the Party with Socialism and nothing but Socialism as its “object”*”.

Those who advocate reforms completely fail to understand the economic laws of capitalism. Examples of reforms pursued by the capitalist Left include rent restrictions, or minimum wage laws, or free travel or so-called “*free*” additions to wages in the form of free food or lodgings and so on.

Rent restrictions simply operate to depress money wages. If the reform was in the interest of the working class then why did the Tory Minister, Mr Long, introduce Rent restriction in 1915? Mr Long was a supporter of the capitalist class and had no reason in furthering the interest of the working class.

Minimum wage laws have, in the main, been totally useless to the working class. If enforced they have a tendency to destroy the jobs where the employers can only survive by paying very low wages. It is interesting to note that in many industries where wages are very low, the employers have got around the Labour Government’s minimum wages legislation by employing school children and foreign students who are exempt from the act.

Many workers receiving wages below the legal minimum do not report their employers for fear of losing their job. In the 1930’s the National Organiser of the agricultural Workers Union wrote to the SOCIALIST STANDARD, saying that, in his view over half the land workers were being paid less than the minimum. They preferred to keep their jobs. Again, if minimum wage laws reforms were beneficial to the interest of the working class why did Winston Churchill, when Home Secretary, introduce minimum wages in the Wages Council Industry? Churchill was hostile to the working class and in 1910 sent troops into the Welsh coalfields.

The same criticism can be applied to free travel and benefits in kind. Levels of wages, as shown by Marx, are determined by market conditions for the sale of commodities, which includes Labour Power, and the extent to which workers organised in Unions can resist down ward pressures on wages by the employers.

It is pure illusion to suppose that so-called “*free*” benefits are an “*addition*” to the wage. In the 19th century there were millions of workers on the land, in domestic service, in the retail trade and in offices who in addition to their money wages received free food, or lodging, or both (they lived in and got free food).

In agriculture you had three lots of workers. Those who got neither food nor lodging – say 30 shillings a week. Those who got free food –say 20 shillings a week. And those who lived in say 10 shillings a week (today’s money is very different).

There was only one wage, whether wholly in cash or part in kind. These workers supposedly enjoying “*free*” benefits were in fact the lowest paid of all workers because they were completely outside trade union organisation. As unions developed they rightly insisted in getting rid of the “*benefit*” system.

As it was once put in the SOCIALIST STANDARD, those workers who get the supposed benefit of “*free*” additions have to fight all the harder to maintain a living wage.

The franchise is a special case. It was pointed out in the early SOCIALIST STANDARD that the Party was able to produce its DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES in the form it has, because in the United Kingdom (unlike many other countries) the majority of votes were held by workers.

It was assumed that other countries, as a consequence of the development of capitalism, would produce the same situation there. Nowadays almost all the countries in the world have votes for workers. In some countries, far from depriving workers of votes, the Government makes voting compulsory, mandatory.

Of course there are some countries where workers do not have the vote, trade unions are not allowed and Socialist parties prescribed. It was with this in mind that our pamphlet QUESTIONS OF THE DAY (1976 edition, page 64) offers the following statement about less developed countries.

The workers:

“besides trying to organise into a Socialist Party ought to struggle to get the freedom to organise into trade unions and win elementary political rights. As in the advanced capitalist countries, however, this should still involve opposition to all other parties in order that the socialist issue shall be kept free from confusion”.

One red herring was the argument that because trade unionists were reformist then, because the S.P.G.B. “*supported*” trade union action why not the reforms too?

Reformism has two components which are both rejected by the Party. There are reformist programmes which see reforms as stepping stones to Socialism. And there are reformist programmes where one or more reforms are pursued, allegedly, to improve the conditions or further the interests of the working class. Trade Union reformism usually takes the latter case; minimum wage legislation, a minimum working week, workers’ representation on boards of directors and so on.

However, the Party does not “*support trade unions*”. What the Party decided about Trade unions (by Party Poll in the 1905 MANIFESTO”) it was not a blanket support of Trade Unions by a very restricted declaration of support for the actions of trade unions. The Socialist Party of Great Britain only supports trade union action based on a clear recognition of the class struggle.

WHAT WE SAID ABOUT RUSSIA

When we are told that Socialism has been obtained in Russia, without the long, hard and tedious work of educating the mass of workers in Socialism we not only deny it but refer our critics to Lenin’s own confessions. His statements prove that even though a vigorous and small minority may be able to seize power for a time, they can only hold it by modifying their plans to suit the ignorant majority (*A Socialist view of Bolshevik Policy*, SOCIALIST STANDARD, July 1920).

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Govan Workers Open Forum December 1931

Why the Socialist Party of Great Britain is opposed to all other Political Parties

Opening Address:

The Chairman, Mr (*name not given*) opened the meeting at 8 P.M. by announcing that the purpose of the Govan Workers Forum was to get workers together for the purpose of examining the objects and principles of the many working class organisations, in order that, if possible, the way of emancipation from the thraldom of capitalism may be made clear to all workers who attended their meetings.

Tonight Comrade Shaw, representing the Socialist Party of Great Britain would in the space of half an hour or so, address members on the position as held by his organisation relative to other political parties. Thereafter the meeting would be open for question and discussion.

Comrade Shaw

Comrade Shaw, in his opening remarks thanked the members of Govan Forum on behalf of the membership of Glasgow Branch, S.P.G.B., for placing a whole evening at the disposal of the Socialist Party in order that the position of that body may be made clear to all present. The title of the address would be: "*Why the Socialist Party of Great Britain is opposed to all other Political Parties*".

The reason why the S.P.G.B was opposed to all other parties including the B.S.I.S.L.P (*British Section of the International Socialist Labour Party*) would become clear to the audience after an examination has been made of the conditions which gave rise to the present party system.

The system of society today, within which workers starved and suffered, was known as Capitalism. This form of society had not always existed but was the product of a previous system known as Feudalism. Feudalism had been preceded by a system known as Chattel Slavery and Chattel Slavery in turn was the product of the first form of society we know of –Primitive Communism.

The different forms of society have expressed the changes which have taken place in the mode of production of society's necessities of life. The basis of Primitive Communism was Common Ownership of the means of production with Social distribution of the product of food, clothing and shelter. No member of society then had too much of the good things of life and others with too little. Each form of society contains within it the seeds of its own destruction and in the course of time private property was the seed that destroyed Primitive Communism.

From the fall of Primitive Communism until the present day, the ownership or non-ownership of property determined one's position in society. Under primitive Communism equality existed and all the people had the same rights and privileges; a relationship of freedom existed which has been lost to the human race since private property was established and can only be recovered by the establishment of Socialism.

In the system known as Chattel Slavery the class relationship was Master and Slave, under Feudalism Lord and Serf and in modern Capitalist society it is Capitalist and Worker. Between these divisions of people or classes in society a struggle went on. This struggle was known to all Socialists as a class struggle. The modern struggle is between Workers and Capitalists and the reason is not difficult to understand.

The means of production today are privately owned, that is to say, a section of society own all the factories, mines, mills, workshops etc., through which ownership they are able to live a life of ease and luxury. The other section owning nothing are forced to sell themselves as workers to the owners of property in order that they get food, clothing, shelter for themselves and their wives and children.

The mode of production being commodity production for profit, the return to the worker takes the form of a money wage. This wage is the money expression of the value of the particular worker's labour power. A Navvy and an Engineer received different amounts of money as wages but both of these workers received the value of his particular labour-power. This value was determined by how much it cost to produce his kind of labour power. All commodities, labour-power included, had their values determined in the same way, by the amount of socially necessary labour embodied in them.

In the process of production the worker produced a surplus over what is returned to him in the form of wages. This was the reason his master the Capitalist employed him and was the sole aim of the Capitalist System.

The worker found through experience that his wage enabled him to purchase only the cheapest necessities of life and to maintain even this he had to continually struggle with his master. To assist him in his struggles he formed Trade unions (some people advocated the formation of industrial unions but there were no difference between them fundamentally), but in spite of all his efforts his conditions gradually became worse and he was able to see that his life was one long story of poverty, degradation and misery.

Many political organisations professed to exist only for the purpose of assisting the working class. The Conservative Party, Liberal Party, Labour Party, Communist Party and a host of others drew up programmes of social reforms which they all guaranteed would, if the workers would only trust them and vote for them, solve all the ills which afflicted the working class.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain had no reforms on its programme and was opposed to all parties who asked the workers to support a reformist policy.

Reform of Capitalism would still leave workers in their slave position. Reforms, apart from the fact that in many cases they had proven worse than the evil which they set out to remedy, were but the normal features of Capitalism. Capitalism and their representatives had been busy reforming the Capitalist System since it had been established but in spite of all their reforms the condition of the working class was worse today than ever it was in its history.

It was the boast of such outstanding defenders of capitalism as A. J. Balfour, J. H. Thomas and many others of the same type that "Reform is the antidote to Revolution" and they were correct. The Communist Party, with its ever-changing lists of reforms should be an example to the workers of the futility of wasting valuable time and energy attempting to reform a system which could not be reformed in the interests of the working class.

The mere ownership of wealth was not enough; a means must be at hand to protect that ownership. This means was the armed forces of a society and were under the control of whichever political party having a majority of representatives in Parliament.

Whoever had control of these forces were masters of the situation. If the workers had not this force to contend with it would be an easy matter for them to dispossess their masters. In 1926 we had an example of the masters using their political control to smash discontent among the workers. History as a matter of fact was full of such examples. So long as the workers left this gigantic weapon in the hands of their masters they were helpless.

Social reform being no solution to the ills suffered by the workers the Socialist Party of Great Britain pointed out that all the evils could be traced to the one cause and to this one cause only –Private Property. When we looked around us we saw notices such as "*This is Private Property*" or "*No admittance except on business etc*".

To the Socialist these were advertisements of the cause of poverty, slums, disease, crime, prostitution, war and all the other curses of the human race.

Having found the one cause for all our troubles we find the remedy almost automatically- Socialism. Abolish private property with production for profit and establish a new system of society based on Common Ownership with production for use.

This is what Socialism means. Under such new conditions would he be lifted above the sordid animal stage of existence such as he finds himself at present.

This was something worthwhile fighting for and the way to achieve such a new system of society was by the workers first of all getting to understand their enslaved position in present day capitalism, to organise with others, in order to take revolutionary political action to control the State machine in order to transform society from the basis up.

This meant the action of a class conscious majority of the workers. Minorities were of no use. We have a class conscious minority today yet it is helpless. That minority would have to go on broadcasting the principles of Socialism until the majority accepted them.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain was the only organisation in this country that faced up to the task other organisations shirked, and, in shirking such an important duty, proved themselves enemies of the workers and unworthy of their support.

Socialism is the only hope of the working class.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain had been advocating nothing else since 1904 and since Socialism was our object all our activities were directed towards getting it established as soon as possible. For the aforementioned we are opposed to all other political parties

(To be continued in SOCIALIST STUDIES 81).

SOCIALISM IS THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE

The only alternative to the capitalist system is Socialism, in which production will be for use, not profit. People will have direct access to goods and services which meet their need and to actively flourish in a socialist society. And Members of a Socialist society will administer their affairs democratically and reasonably. This is the social system the Socialist Party of Great Britain seeks to see establish. We cannot do it on our own. Socialism has to be established consciously and politically by a Socialist working class majority

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There Is No 'Right to Work' Under Capitalism

Under capitalism there is no right to employment. The means of production, the raw resources, factories and transport system are owned by the employers, the capitalist class to the exclusion of the rest of society.

Workers are excluded from owning the means of production and as a consequence they are forced onto the labour market. They have to find an employer to get a job and to earn a wage or salary.

However employers only hire workers under one specific economic condition and that is if they are going to make a profit. There is nothing in capitalism that entitles a worker the right to be employed. Workers are employed only if the capitalist is willing to buy their labour power or ability to work. How could the government force employers to employ someone when they are not making a profit or they are about to go bankrupt? They can't.

So the demand for a "*right to work*" is as baseless and conservative in its thinking as is the claim made for a "*fair wage*". Capitalism can never be "*fair*". It is a brutal competitive system of class exploitation.

This has not stopped Trade Unions and political organisations from setting up a group called "**Right to Work**". **Right to Work** was launched at a conference in June 2009 by the UCU, PCS, CWU, RMT, NUJ and NUT unions; Stop the War Coalition and Unite against Fascism. **Right to Work** held a day of action over unemployment in August and picketed the Tory Conference in October 2010.

Here is what, Chris Bamberg, of **Right to Work** said, forgetting to add that he was also a leading member of the SWP:

"If in Greece, if in France, if in Spain they can have a general strike against cuts and austerity, then we can have a general strike here in Britain." (SOCIALIST WORKER 9th October 2010)

However, the General Strikes in France and Spain were utterly ineffectual. In France, President Sarkozy got his reforms passed through the legislature thereby increasing the pensionable age of workers and the austerity measures were voted in by the Greek Parliament. Capitalism in both countries was not threatened.

The Trade Unions who call for a right to work have a partial excuse for their ignorance. They have no understanding of the workings of the class system in which their members are daily exploited. This need not be the case. They can usefully read and understand about capitalism from Marx and other Socialist writings. All that stands in the way of Socialism is political ignorance.

Trade unions are not cut out for a political struggle against the capitalist class and its State. Trade unions face severe limitation on what they can and cannot do under capitalism. In trade depressions when there is high unemployment they are at a disadvantage. When coming up against an intransigent employer or State prepared to prolong a strike or use the machinery of government to crush the strike they are also at a disadvantage.

Trade Unions should recognise that they and their members are involved in a class struggle. However, because the private ownership of the means of production is protected by the machinery of government, the class struggle is in fact a political struggle. What is required is not "*the right to work*" but the establishment of socialism. Therefore there is a necessity for workers to organise into a principled Socialist Party with only socialism as its objective.

The excuse of ignorance in the pursuit of futile reforms like the so-called right to work – a reform capitalism can never deliver - is not open to the cynical parasites of the capitalist Left, like the SWP and The Socialist Party. They take part in this political charade to feed off the anger and discontent of a non-socialist working class. The Socialist Party, the SWP and other opportunistic organisations do not believe workers are cut out for understanding the case for Socialism. Instead workers are offered unrealisable "*rights*" to demonstrate for.

For the leaders of the capitalist Left the hope is that the anger and discontent of non-socialist workers can be harnessed into a general strike, direct action, the creation of "*Soviets*" or worker councils and the imposition of a Leninist political leadership onto non-socialist workers to "*smash the State*" and for these leaders to be elevated to the position of a ruling class. It is a pure fantasy politics; a childish romanticism acted out by those who have to go to sleep each night below a portrait of Che Guevara. They will never grow up. Workers should ignore the capitalist Left. Let them stay in their political playpens.

As Marx noted with the conservative cry for a "*fair day's wage*" what workers should be struggling for is the abolition of the wages system. The same can be said for the equally reactionary call for "*The Right to Work*". Why should workers want the "*right*" to be employed and exploited? As Marx's son-in-law Paul Lafargue sarcastically pointed out workers should be asking for the Right to be Lazy! Get rid of capitalism. That is where the interest of workers lies.

The Socialist response to the failure of capitalism to meet the needs of all society is the necessity for conscious and political action by a Socialist majority. The answer to the failure of capitalism is to replace employment, labour markets, the buying and selling of labour power, class exploitation and the profit system with a social system of free and voluntary labour producing useful things required by people to live worthwhile and secure lives.

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Socialism and Work

Socialists believe that there should be no compulsion to work on the grounds that labour should be an intrinsic and creative need of the human condition. In Capitalism many workers carry out functions which are totally useless to a future Socialist society; banking, accountancy, the law and so on. With the establishment of Socialism former bankers, accountants, solicitors, bureaucrats, politicians and others will be free to contribute to useful social wealth creation.

Work in Socialism would be voluntary not directed by managers and will be as creative and interesting as possible. To what extent someone would contribute to the social labour of society would need to be balanced against family commitments and taking part in the democratic affairs of a Socialist society. There will be no social stigma either to work or to bringing up a family.

For critics of Socialism who argue that men and woman are inherently lazy we ask for the evidence for human beings' innate sloth but none is forthcoming. People can be lazy but they have to work to keep mentally and physically fit. Work is an essential human activity. However work and employment is not the same thing. If men and women find work unpleasant, hard and monotonous under capitalism it is because of the institution of private property ownership.

It is the private ownership of the means of production and distribution which forces workers into the labour market; to sell their labour power to an employer for a wage and salary and to lose control over their time, how it is used and for what purpose. Employment is the problem not work *per se*.

In itself physical and mental work is not repellent. People engage in physical and mental work outside employment and find it enjoyable. In fact they devote a great deal of their so-called "*leisure-time*" to hard, physical and dirty work. Caring for an allotment is hard work often back breaking and repetitive. Yet this useful toil gives great pleasure. Bringing up a baby, changing nappies, playing with children is also hard work; the older you are the harder it is. But it is undertaken with love not complaint. Other physical activities are equally rewarding when undertaken for leisure like building a bicycle from scratch.

Socialists state that people often work without reward, even in capitalism. And the existence of social co-operative work is projected onto a Socialist system where work will be undertaken freely, without reward and just to meet social need. There would be no coercion. Even if someone could not work in Socialism they would not be stigmatised as they are under capitalism and would they still have direct access to what they needed in order to live a worthwhile life and take part in the democratic affairs of society. In socialism there will be no job market and competition for employment, no capitalists and no wages system.

Machinery would be used, not to make men and women an appendage to production, but help in the process of creativity. The development of technology will create shorter hours and lighter burdens but it would also help in the production of durable and beautiful things necessary for social consumption. Production in Socialism will be by a free association of men and women. As Socialists they would be united in their common objective of meeting human need wherever it existed and their view of work will be radically different to the current state of affairs where they find themselves employed and exploited by another class within the artificial boundaries of antagonistic nation states in a permanent state of competition. In other words, workers in Socialism will no longer be consigned as wage slaves within the imprisonment of the wages system.

The extension of the use of machines, computers and techniques of production to assist creative labour will ensure men and women will be able to realise their true potential as human beings. Unlike the irrationality and anarchy of commodity production socialist planning of production for use would be rational and democratic. Information would be transparent rather than opaque as it is under the prices system where only buying consumers count. Social and rational work processes in Socialism will no longer be pressurised and tyrannical but harmonious and gentle. Work in socialism will be the normal human way of living; a basic social need fulfilled. Creativity should be a fundamental characteristic of men and women's lives. A world-wide Socialist society of workers freely associating and administrating in common the means of production under democratic control by all of society will transform the natural resources of the world to meet human need in all its diversity – such is the socialist objective socialists are currently struggling for.

In Socialism men and women, as rational and creative workers, will need no supernatural world to believe in, but instead will concentrate their minds on this finite and transient one, not to contemplate it, but to transform the world with due environmental consideration to one fit for human beings to grow up in. It is Marx's central theory of history that workers are both cause and effect; determined by their environment but able to alter and adapt the environment to suit themselves. So-called human nature is not a barrier to a socialist life of co-operative harmony. Human history and the various social systems that have been formed and disappeared by class struggle is the record of social evolution. No social system lasts forever and this equally applies to capitalism today as it once did to Feudalism, chattel slavery and primitive Communism. Work requires both thinking and acting upon material reality. To come to know the world is to begin the process to transform the world in a revolutionary way; to fashion goods in order to survive and flourish as human beings. In this respect the true thinker is not the intellectual spinning philosophical and theological systems of thought but the worker as social being within a society of co-operative equals.

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The Problem of Production & Distribution

More than a century ago Karl Marx made two seemingly contradictory statements:

It is not a fact that too many necessities of life are produced in proportion to the existing population. The reverse is true. Not enough is produced to satisfy the wants of the great mass decently and humanely...It is not a fact that too much wealth is produced. But it is true that there is a periodical overproduction of wealth in its capitalistic and self-contradictory form (CAPITAL, VOL. III, Kerr edition, pp. 302-3).

The statements are not contradictory, and both of them are still true.

In the world as a whole and in separate parts of it there are always masses of people not enough “*to satisfy wants... decently and humanely*”. United Nation sources estimate that in “the developing nations” there are 925 million people on a desperately low standard of life, of “*bare subsistence starvation*” (www.worldhunger.org) and in the industrialised countries, including the United Kingdom, there are large numbers of workers on low wages, unemployment pay, pensions or social security payment insufficient to meet the cost of a decent, humane standard of living.

Moreover, as a continuing process, the production of the articles required by these hundreds of millions – food, shelter, clothing and so on – is not sufficient to meet their needs quite apart from the fact that they have not the money to buy what they lack. This is true in spite of the appearance from time to time and sometimes for longish periods of big stocks of goods held off the market; these stocks, to the extent that they are really surplus and not necessary reserves, would not be sufficient to supply the continuing massive deficiency.

How to Increase Productivity

The periodic overproduction that Marx referred to, one of the inevitable contradictions of capitalism, was that in the normal –recurring – cycle of expansion, boom, crisis and stagnation there arises the phase of commodities being surplus to market needs because they cannot be sold for a profit. But by far the greatest defect in capitalism is not that surpluses accumulate from time to time but that production itself is held back or halted without any regard to the fact that that the unsatisfied needs of the human race are as great as ever. Much of the accumulation of stocks held off the market by companies (often encouraged by government policies) is due to the fall in demand in a depression caused by unemployment: the unsold stocks increase at the same time as the workers’ purchasing power is reduced.

The insufficiency of the social wealth produced and the permanent deprivation of the masses of the population is not due to inherent technical limitations on humankind’s powers of production. If it were not for the limitations imposed by capitalism the amount of social wealth produced would always be greater, indeed very much greater than it actually is; both a century ago when Marx wrote and at the present time.

Government spokesmen and economists are continually confronted by the reality of capitalism. In periods of boom when productivity is increasing they believe productivity will continue an up-ward path. Then an economic crisis and trade depression occurs, productivity falls and growth also falls. Over the past few years over two million workers have been unemployed in Britain. In Europe as a whole the figure has been over 20 million (EUROSTAT 2010). If these unemployed workers had been allowed to work and to be trained there could now have been a much larger productive capacity already in existence.

This is, however, only a small party of the increase of the production of useful articles that could take place if capitalism was replaced by Socialism. Socialism would make it possible to increase the production of useful articles in two main ways; by utilizing the large numbers of able-bodied people not working at all, and by transferring to useful production all those workers now engaged on operations necessary only to capitalism – war and armament production, the armed services, financial, insurance and similar occupations. Overall it would be possible by these means to increase useful production to something like double the present level simply by revolutionizing the basis of the social system.

The Failure of the Social Reformers

When the Socialist Party of Great Britain was formed in 1904 to achieve a Socialist revolution it was opposed by

various reformist organisations which offered as an alternative the gradualist doctrine of relying on legislation and trade-union action to make continuing progress towards the abolition of poverty and inequality. As regards the concentration of ownership of accumulated wealth in the hands of the small capitalist minority, all their efforts have achieved practically nothing. They cannot claim that any of the social problems they promised to deal with – housing, unemployment, and low wages – has in fact been remedied. At most it can be said that some of the worst aspects of poverty has been lessened as the capitalist class demanded a healthier and better educated workforce.

The social reformers set themselves to bring about within the capitalist system the twofold objective of increasing the total production of social wealth and of securing a less unequal distribution of it, and these two objectives are still at the forefront of their political programmes.

Distribution of income is somewhat less unequal than it was, though how much is due to the circumstances of British capitalism, the organising ability of trade union action to gain higher pay and how much to the specific efforts of the reformist organizations as a matter of conjecture.

And consider the constant failure of the political parties who set out to end poverty within the anti-social framework of commodity production and exchange for profit. Under the last Labour Government the distribution of wealth to the highest 10% of the population, particularly the top 1%, actually increased (BBC NEWS 18th January 2008). In the current depression workers have seen their pay fall by 5% (DAILY TELEGRAPH 16th February 2011).

But as regards total production of wealth, all there is to show is an annual increase averaging little more than 1 per cent a year. In real terms, that is, discounting the mere increase of prices, the total production of wealth in relation to a much higher population is now only about double what is was at the beginning of the Twentieth Century (S. Broadberry and M. O. Mahony BRITAIN'S 20TH CENTURY PRODUCTIVITY PERFORMANCE IN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE, Table 1, p. 31 www2.warwick.ac.uk 2005) – an increase no larger than could have been achieved then by going over to a Socialist system of society.

In mistakenly believing capitalism can be made to work in the interest of all society the reformers have wasted one hundred and seventy years failing to resolve entrenched social problems. And in marginalising the Socialist case for the establishment of common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society the social reformers, politicians, charities and other similar bodies have condemned millions to unnecessary death.

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Commodity Struggle or Class Struggle

There is an old view still floating about that only those workers who are class-conscious and organised politically for the overthrow of capitalism take part in the class struggle, and that the average worker, who is not class-conscious, takes no part in the struggle being simply a commodity seller.

Ideas don't fall down from the sky but are drawn from the material at hand; consequently the idea of the class struggle must have been drawn from the struggle itself. In other words the class struggle must have existed before we could become conscious of it. Therefore the class unconscious must have waged the class struggle in the first place, so why cannot the class unconscious still take part in it?

Those who contend that the class struggle only exists where there are class-conscious workers, and then only between the class-conscious and the ruling class, are driven to support the absurd position that the class struggle is imposed on society, that instead of ideas being the product of material conditions are the product of ideas – the utopian view.

In spite of contentions to the contrary, no individual with a mighty brain came on the scene possessed with the brilliant idea of imposing the class struggle on society and ordering the combatants to line up and get on with it. The

combatants were there; the struggle existed; but whereas formerly it was fought blindly, now some of the combatants, having a clear knowledge of the position, fight with understanding, and therefore to far better purpose.

While there is a similarity between the worker coming upon the market to sell his commodity and the average capitalist coming upon the market to sell his wares, yet there are essential differences – the differences that breed the class struggle. There are opposing interests between buyers and sellers of commodities – sectional interests – but there is a class cleavage between buyers and sellers of the workers commodity and class interest enters the matter. It is a class commodity that the worker sells not an ordinary commodity, and it is in his capacity as a member of the master class, as opposed to the working class, that the capitalist buys it. The workers combine among themselves to sell their commodity (labour power) as high as possible – the masters combine among themselves to buy it as low as possible. The worker cannot make a profit out of the sale of his labour-power; he can only live more or less well. The capitalist, on the other hand, buys labour-power to make a profit out of its consumption. It is out of the consumption of labour-power that all surplus wealth is derived.

(*Commodity Struggle or Class struggle*, SOCIALIST STANDARD, November 1920).

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Object and Declaration of Principles

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN HOLDS:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (ie land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

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